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ABSTRACT

An introductory problem for a theatre history course presents the process of group decision making and problem solving in theatre studies, encourages students to compare values when collecting information and making decisions, and illustrates the variety of dramatic forms, production styles, and economic concerns of contemporary theatre. Entitled "Manhattan with a Twist," the problem requires that students first make individual priority lists for seeing 14 Broadway and Off-Broadway shows and then, in small groups, create single lists of the five most and five least recommended shows. Students are then asked to indicate at least three factors that most influenced the solution to the problem. Unlike an earlier values clarification exercise, "The Fishing Trip," this problem incorporates material students expect in a theatre history course, making a separate introduction of the guided design process unnecessary. (Student directions for the "Manhattan with a Twist" exercise are appended.) (MM)

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# VALUES CLARIFICATION
# FOR
# INTRODUCING THEATRE STUDIES

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VALUES CLARIFICATION
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It is the purpose of this paper to explain how the process of "valuing" was incorporated into the Guided Design strategy by devising a new introductory problem for Theatre History. It was decided that the new problem should serve two functions: One, to begin the decision-making strategy using content directly related to the course; and, two, to illustrate how "values" operate in the process of problem solving. The new problem was used during the 1981-82 academic year.

Students entering Theatre History were predisposed to think of the subject as a long list of boring and meaningless facts and they usually wanted to know how many facts they would be responsible for memorizing. Also, they expected a series of dull lectures. An introductory problem was needed to draw the students immediately into subject matter operating on levels other than simple memorization, preferably a problem which would require a few simple facts (knowledge), easy comprehension of the situation, application of information toward the solution of the conflict, analysis of the alternatives, synthesis, and evaluation of the process, six categories recommended for learning in Bloom's "cognitive domain."[1]

For two years the problem used to introduce Guided Design to the class was "The Fishing Trip" by Wales and Stager.[4] In this problem five friends become stranded on an island. They exchange ideas in order to identify their problem and make a list of possessions they regard as being essential to their survival until help arrives. This illustrated the Guided Design strategy very well and it operated in both the "cognitive domain" and "affective domain." However, since it was a problem about "survival" it did not relate directly to course content in Theatre History. Students were somewhat bewildered and overwhelmed by the introduction of a strategy for problem solving in a theatre course. Attitudes toward theatre were varied. Students taking the course as part of their college requirements or as a necessary fulfillment of a departmental major were apprehensive about the subject. They approached it with feelings of inadequacy. If the process of "valuing" could be introduced in the first problem it was thought that it might give students confidence in their

decision-making for later, more cognitive, open-ended problems to be used in the course.

## VALUES CLARIFICATION

An approach to values and teaching in a study by Raths, Harmin, and Simon is called values clarification.[3] It recognizes that many people have difficulty "pulling themselves together" and that decisions seem too complicated, pressures too varied, and changes seem too unsettling. "Consequently some people flounder in confusion, apathy, or inconsistency." What the values clarification methodology does is to focus people's attention on aspects of their lives that may indicate things they value. It accepts other opinions without judgement. It encourages more informed choices and it points out that people can reflect on values issues to give them better self direction. In short, values clarification is a process for choosing, prizing, and acting when making a decision. Value indicators are expressions such as goals and purposes, aspirations, attitudes, interests, feelings, beliefs, activities, worries, obstacles. To include these aspects of problem solving would recognize what O.J. Harvey and associates called the "affective domain" of learning.[4]

## THE NEW INTRODUCTORY PROBLEM*

The new introductory problem was entitled "Manhattan With A Twist." Its learning objectives were:

1. To introduce the process of group decision-making and problem solving in theatre studies.
2. To compare values when collecting information and making decisions.
3. To illustrate that theatre in our society comprises a diversified representation of types of drama, styles of production, and economic investments.

The problem was patterned after "The Fishing Trip" in that it asked for an individual ranking of choices followed by a second group ranking after discussing similarities and differences among the individual preferences. The setting for the problem was stated as follows:

> Twenty students from a history class went on a field trip to New York City. They were mainly interested in history, so they had already visited the Historical Society and the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see large collections of artifacts closely related to their studies. They had one more day, a

* For the complete problem, see Appendix.

Wednesday, before they were to return home and by noon they would have completed all of the scheduled activities on their list. It was suggested by their guide (the teacher) that they might plan to attend the theatre as a bonus to their trip. Five students were appointed to study the situation and come up with a recommendation. They found a Ticket Development Office in the Edison Hotel (W. 46th St.) in which they were staying and discovered that some of the shows available gave group rates at half price.

A list of fourteen choices of Broadway and Off-Broadway shows was provided with the location of the theatre, the price, and a short description of the play. The list included a good mixture of current hits, musicals, classical plays, the avant-garde, and experimental fare. From this list, students were to make individual priority lists. When the problem continued with the next instruction it became a group decision-making exercise. With the aid of reviews for some of the plays the group was instructed to recommend the top five shows in order of preference. The bottom five, too, were to be listed as the least desireable. Then they were asked to write at least three factors which most influenced the solution to the problem.

By comparison "The Fishing Trip" calls for lists of "things" most necessary for survival. Good choices are based on logical reasoning. Lists in "Manhattan With A Twist" call for titles of plays and theatres, "performances", at which leisure time is to be spent. Good choices are a matter of opinion based primarily on feelings.

Choices depended on attitudes toward theatre or "show business." Many had limited theatre-going experience. What was familiar went quickly to the top of the list. Television advertising, word of mouth advocacy, radio, magazines, newspapers, provided their common knowledge. The need to go to the theatre at all depended on how emotionally they were affected by media exposure.

What value judgements did the students make? Broadway "hits" over Off or Off-Off Broadway fare. For a "hit" they would pay the extent of the group rate (up to $16.00) for a ticket, but not full price even for shows they wanted to see. Classical choices were commonly considered dull or "boring" and frequently ended near the bottom of the list. "Entertainment" was valued highly. Plays or musicals with ethnic appeal were important to minorities. Advertised plays with love stories, music, suspense, or murder rated highly. Location or size of theatre had little bearing on selections.

Exchanging ideas in group decision-making revealed that a student more familiar with choices because of first-hand experience or wider literary exposure could influence decisions toward a particular play, if it had been seen. Students would listen to peer experience and sometimes take advice for the sake of a group decision. Values were flexible. Usually it meant that apprehensive students became interested students through the shared experience.

The following chart shows typical group recommendations.

CHART SHOWING
TYPICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TWO DIFFERENT GROUPS

GROUP I

| Priority | Title | Type | Price | Place |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Top five: | | | | |
| First | ANNIE | Musical | $16.00 | Broadway |
| Second | AMADEUS | "Hit" Drama | $16.25 | Broadway |
| Third | PIRATES OF PENZANCE | Musical | $15.00 | Broadway |
| Fourth | SOPHISTICATED LADIES | Musical | $16.25 | Broadway |
| Fifth | JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAM COAT | Musical | $12.50 | Broadway |
| Bottom five: Least desireable | Free Choice of other full price tickets | Any | $17.00 to $32.50 | |
| Second Least | THE CHERRY ORCHARD | Classic Realism | $ 6.00 | Off Broadway |
| Third Least | TWELVE DREAMS | Psychological Drama | $ 3.00 | Off Broadway |
| Fourth Least | ANGEL CITY | Avant garde | $ 3.00 | Off Off Broadway |
| Fifth Least | EVIL SPIRIT | Experimental | $ 2.00 | Off Off Broadway |

GROUP II

| Priority | Title | Type | Price | Place |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Top five: | | | | |
| First | PIRATES OF PENZANCE | Musical | $15.00 | Broadway |
| Second | AMADEUS | "Hit" Drama | $16.25 | Broadway |
| Third | A SOLDIER'S PLAY | Drama | $ 7.00 | Off Broadway |
| Fourth | ANNIE | Musical | $16.00 | Broadway |
| Fifth | OTHELLO | Classic | $13.75 | Broadway |
| Bottom five: Least Desireable | Free Choice of other full price tickets | Any | $17.00 to $32.50 | |
| Second Least | ANGEL CITY | Avant garde | $ 3.00 | Off Off Broadway |
| Third Least | THE CHERRY ORCHARD | Classic Realism | $ 6.00 | Off Broadway |
| Fourth Least | TWELVE DREAMS | Psychological Drama | $ 3.00 | Off Broadway |
| Fifth Least | CRIMES OF THE HEART | Humorous Drama | $12.50 | Broadway |

When the priority lists were completed by all groups they were compared to see how similar they were and to discuss reasons for differences. In this case it is interesting to see that A SOLDIER'S PLAY and OTHELLO were included among the top five recommended by Group II. One of the students had seen the first of these and thought it was an excellent play. It had also had good critical reviews. It was a play, too, that would have special minority interest. OTHELLO was chosen, not because it was a play by Shakespeare or that it was a classic, but rather because the black actor, James Earl Jones, and the English actor, Christopher Plummer, two performers who had received excellent reviews, were in it.

The final feedback suggests that the discussion helped to compare interests and values among the students and that the group could feel good about its choices because strong values were based on the following:

1. Free choice. Values are stronger when they are chosen freely without coercian.
2. There were a number of alternatives. The shows ranged from small experimental to the large and spectacular.
3. Each of the alternatives were given careful consideration. They included how much it would cost, location of the theatre, type of show and speculation on the quality of theatrical experience.
4. They liked the choices they made. They respected the process and were happy about the priority list.
5. They were willing to talk about their preferences to others. It was only because everyone was willing to talk about it that the group could come to a consensus.
6. They could take action on their selections based on the information available and the personal exchanges of viewpoints.
7. They felt confident that if they had to make a choice again in a group situation they knew how to proceed. They could repeat this process in other situations.

The seven criteria listed in the final feedback are basically those used by Raths, Harmin, and Simon to define a value. Collectively they describe the process of valuing.

## CONCLUSIONS

After using the new introductory problem during the 1981-82 academic year it can be concluded that it does achieve its objectives. It does introduce the process of group decision-making and problem solving in theatre studies, compare values when collecting information and making decisions, and illustrate that theatre in our society comprises a diversified representation of types of drama, styles of production, and economic investment. When compared to "The Fishing Trip" as an introduction the the Guided Design strategy it has both disadvantages and advantages:

### Disadvantages

1. The new problem is not as thorough a description of the Guided Design strategy as "The Fishing Trip." It does not include as much explanation of the problem solving process.
2. The "expert" is not established as an authority for comparing with group decisions. Although the teacher may wish for more informed choices no value judgements are imposed.
3. Since the problem operates more in the "affective domain" the more cognitive aspects of decision-making are left for later open-ended problems.
4. In order to keep the problem current the choice of shows has to be up-dated. Although a more universal list might be selected, students identify readily when the material is not all hypothetical.

### Advantages

1. The new problem is shorter than "The Fishing Trip." It has fewer instructions and feedbacks and can be completed in about sixty minutes.
2. The new problem incorporates course content. The group decision-making process is introduced by using material students expect in a theatre course. Consequently, the new problem requires less justification. It is not necessary to introduce Guided Design separately from Theatre History.
3. The emphasis is on value judgements rather than knowledge. Exchanging ideas with peers about value judgements having to do with a trip to the theatre seems non-threatening. Students sense little fear that their answers will be wrong.

4. Students do not normally speak about the concept of values. This problem points up an awareness without being insistent. Students feel good about their recommendations. Comparison of group decisions shows that results can be different without being wrong.
5. Though group recommendations may not be based on academic knowledge, the fact that classical plays such as those by Shakespeare, Chekhov, or Ibsen may have been by-passed or put on the bottom of the list, opens the way for further discussion about historical background.

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# APPENDIX

MANHATTAN WITH A TWIST

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Learning Objectives for MANHATTAN WITH A TWIST

1. To introduce the process of group decision-making and problem-solving in theatre studies.

2. To compare values when collecting information and making decisions.

3. To illustrate that theatre in our society comprises a diversified representation of types of drama, styles of production, and economic investments.

# MANHATTAN WITH A TWIST

## Introduction

You will be asked to participate in two ways for this problem. First, there is an individual request to list choices in a ranking order. Second, you will act as part of a team to make a priority list for the group by comparing and discussing similarities and differences in the individual preferences.

## The Setting

Twenty students from a history class went on a field trip to New York City. They were mainly interested in history, so they had already visited the Historical Society and the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see large collections of artifacts closely related to their studies. They had one more day, a Wednesday, before they were to return home and by noon they would have completed all of the scheduled activities on their list. It was suggested by their guide (the teacher) that they might plan to attend the theatre as a bonus to their trip. Five students were appointed to study the situation and come up with a recommendation. They found a Ticket Development Office in the Edison Hotel (W. 46th St.) in which they were staying and discovered that some of the shows available gave group rates at half price.

## Instruction A

The following shows were listed by the Ticket Development Office as being available for half price provided twenty or more people are in the group. List the shows in a priority order without consulting with anyone else. Simply choose a preference list as quickly as you can. This should take no longer than five or six minutes.

## Broadway

_____ Annie. A musical inspired by the comic strip "Little Orphan Annie," set in the Great Depression, in which Annie becomes the symbol of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. (N.Y. Times, 1/24/82) $20 -$32. URIS, 51st St. W. of Broadway.

_____ Amadeus. The Tony award-winning black comedy by Peter Shaffer about the rivalry between Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Antonio Salieri, court composer under Emperor Joseph II of Austria. (N.Y. Times , 1/24/82) $21 - $32.50. BROADHURST, 235 W. 44th.

_____ Sophisticated Ladies. A gorgeous and spritely musical production featuring to great advantage the splendidly sinuous and sultry works of Duke Ellington. (Cue, 2/1/82) $23 - $32.50. LUNT/FONTANNE, 205 W. 46th.

_____ Othello. James Earl Jones and Christopher Plummer star in the Shakespeare tragedy. $13.50 - $27.50. WINTER GARDEN, 51st & Broadway.

_____ The Pirates of Penzance. A musical. For light-hearted lunancy and magnificently mindless fun, there is nothing like it. It spruces up Gilbert and Sullivan and lights up Broadway. (Cue, 2/1/82) $20 - $30. MINSKOFF, 200 W. 45th.

_____ Crimes of the Heart. Beth Henley's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, set in a small Mississippi town, about three sisters -- one of whom has just shot her husband. (N.Y. Times, 1/24/82) $18.50 - $25.00. JOHN GOLDEN, 252 W. 45th.

_____ Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. This exceedingly well received downtown rock musical by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber who gave us Evita, Cats, and Jesus Christ Superstar, has come to Broadway. (Cue, 2/1/82) $18 -$25. ROYALE, 242 W. 45th.

_____ Fifth of July. A play by Lanford Wilson, set on a farm near Lebanon, Mo., and concerned with former classmates at Berkeley in the late 60's. (N.Y. Times, 1/24/82) $14.50 - $22.50. NEW APOLLO, 234 W. 43rd.

## Off Broadway

_____ The Cherry Orchard. Anton Chekhov's last play. $10 - $12. CSC, 136 E. 13 St.

_____ Twelve Dreams. James Lapine's play, inspired by an obscure case history of Carl Jung's about a 10 year-old girl who has had a series of dreams and the search to interpret their meaning. Balefully mesmerizing fascination here, also extraordinary cleverness. (Cue, 2/1/82) $6. PUBLIC THEATER, Martinson Hall, 425 Lafayette St.

_____ A Soldier's Play. A drama set at the beginning of WWII in 1940, about murder and soldiers, is satisfyingly multifarious and avoids pigeonholes, pitfalls, easy answers, and easy questions. Fuller's work consistently elicits intellectual interest, emotional involvement, and critical assent: (Cue, 2/1/82) $9 - $14. Negro Ensemble Company, THEATRE FOUR, 424 W. 55th.

## Off-Off Broadway

_____ Angel City. Revival of Sam Shepard's surrealistic movieland satire. $6. WONDERHORSE THEATER, 83 E. 4th St.

_____ Evil Spirit. A play about superstition, possession, exorcism, involving mid-Eastern star-crossed lovers. $4. CLASSIC THEATER, 114 W. 14th St.

_____ The Ticket Development Office could provide tickets for any other show advertised if full prices were paid in case the group decided against the group discount rates.

Feedback A

When the lists were completed the students got together to see how precisely the priority choices agreed. It was discovered that although there was some agreement in a general way, that is, the same shows were in the upper five, there were enough differences to make a single choice difficult.

Instruction B Defining the Problem and Suggesting Possible Solutions

Discussion was necessary in order to compare the lists, particularly the five top choices. It was also interesting to compare the lists as to the last choices on each list. They decided that now that they had individual preferences, they should talk about them so that a group decision could be made. They decided to make another list of the top five in a priority rating after having sufficiently discussed the differences in individual choices. Although they would like to have had more information on the available shows they agreed to do the best they could and, if possible, use newspaper or magazine reviews to aid them.

Discuss your choices as if you were the five appointed students. Choose a leader to help move the process along, and a secretary to write down the list. For contrast include the five shows least likely to be chosen. State the problem to be solved by writing it down in a complete sentence.

Feedback B

The discussion that ensued was quite animated. A few students had seen or read some of the plays on the list. Others had no idea what they might be like. They took into consideration such constraints as price of tickets, location of the theatres relative to their hotel, reviews they had heard about or read, actors and actresses they liked when it was clear to them they were in a show, personal preferences for certain types of shows (e.g musicals, mysteries, drama), speculation on the quality of productions, and how thought-provoking or entertaining the plays might be. When they could not decide on the first choice after considerable discussion they took a vote to decide the issue. They also discussed the bottom five choices and enjoyed talking about the reasons. The problem was to decide which shows in descending order would best satisfy the group, considering all limitations.

Instruction C Evaluating the Constraints and the Solution

When they reflected on their decisions they realized that some, if not all, members had changed their priorities after the group discussion. They were satisfied, for the most part, to have made the decision but they also recognized compromise in reconciling individual differences. They tried to express what was most important in the process of making a group decision. List at least three factors that most influenced the solution to the problem.

Feedback C

When they handed in the choice of shows in a list to their teacher they asked how it might compare to his/her choice. The teacher explained that since this was an educational field trip the educational point of view would be to choose those shows that might best combine historical, educational, and entertaining values.

It was realized, however, that the students may have decided that the historical and educational values may have been less regarded in this instance, particularly if the class decided that "entertainment" would be most important after the more studius tours of the museums. Then, too, the classical dramas on the list were not all in prominent Broadway theatres and this may have been an important factor in this bonus trip to the theatre. Artistic values, too, may have been considered more important than historical or "educational" reasons.

The teacher explained that it would have been preferable to have had more good information on all of the possibilities but that the discussion helped to compare interests and values among the students. The group could feel good about its choices because strong values were based on the following:

1. Free choice. Values are stronger when they are chosen freely and without coercian.

2. There were a number of alternatives. The shows ranged from small experimental to the large and spectacular.

3. Each of the alternatives were given careful consideration. They included how much it would cost, how far they would have to travel, as well as the type of show and speculation on the quality of theatrical experience.

4. They liked the choices they made. They respected the process and were happy about the priority list.

5. They were willing to talk about their preferences to others. It was only because everyone was willing to talk about it that the group could come to a consensus.

6. They could take action on their selections based on the information available and the personal exchanges of viewpoints.

7. They felt confident that if they had to make a choice again in a group situation they knew how to proceed. They could repeat this process in other situations.